

Fodor Denies Being Agent But Says He Helped C.I.A.

By LAWRENCE VAN GELDER

Eugene Fodor, president of Fodor's Travel Guides, Inc., conceded yesterday that he had cooperated with the Central Intelligence Agency but denied his portrayal by E. Howard Hunt Jr. as a former agent for the C.I.A. in Austria.

Describing Mr. Hunt's statements about him as "largely inaccurate," Mr. Fodor also denied that the agency had helped to found and fund his publishing organization.

Replying to Mr. Hunt by a written statement given to a New York Times reporter and in an interview, he conceded, however, that "financial arrangements" between himself and the agency had existed.

And while he asserted that neither he nor his company had ever participated in any domestic activities of the C.I.A., he declined to comment on Mr. Hunt's assertion that the well-known series of travel books bearing Mr. Fodor's name had provided "cover" for C.I.A. agents eager to travel to foreign countries disguised as travel writers.

'All Ancient History'

He also said that despite his association with the C.I.A. he, personally, "was never engaged in intelligence activities of any kind, and was devoting my full efforts exclusively toward the creation, production and promotion of my travel guidebooks."

In any event, he wrote, "My relationship with the agency ended many years ago. It is enough to say that it is all ancient history, far removed and completely irrelevant to the events of today."

The allegations by Mr. Hunt were made before Senate Watergate investigators in late 1973. Mr. Hunt, a Watergate burglar who pleaded guilty, returned in 1970 after serving more than 20 years with the C.I.A. In his testimony before the Senate Watergate committee, he said that he had served as the first chief of covert action for the C.I.A.'s Domestic Operations Division, which was established in 1962.

Explaining his involvement with the C.I.A., Mr. Fodor, who was born in Hungary in 1905 and is now an American citizen, said that shortly after he founded his publishing company in 1950, he was approached by "old Army friends who invited me to cooperate with the C.I.A."

'Glad To Be of Help'

"The nature of the relationship and the assistance I rendered remains confidential as far as I am concerned," he said. "Suffice it to say that I

was glad, and proud, to be of help."

Citing the reasons for his cooperation, he emphasized the political climate of the times—"Stalinist totalitarian terror;" his exposure in his postwar years in the Army "to orthodox Communist methods and takeovers in Eastern Europe," and his knowledge that world War II had not brought an end to "concentration camps, police terror and political tyranny."

He said, "C.I.A.'s role in this struggle appeared to be vitally important. This awareness, together with my feelings of indebtedness to my adopted country, America—which had treated me so well—strongly motivated me to be useful if I could."

Mr. Fodor added that he had never met or had any dealings with Mr. Hunt, whose testimony was published in The New York Times last Dec. 31.

There are 48 titles in the Fodor's travel guide series, of which more than 25 are published annually in revised editions, according to Mr. Fodor. He is listed as the "creator and chief editor" of the series.

An editor at Fodor's Guides said, "We have writers either in the country or that we have dispatched to the country that write the articles, submit them to Mr. Fodor and the rest of the editorial people, and they are edited."

He likened these writers to newspaper "stringers" and said that they were "very moderate-



The New York Times

Eugene Fodor at an interview here yesterday.

ly" recommended. He also said that Mr. Fodor continues to travel and write.